

Gunner's Seat: Sullivan Cup's Importance

With spring just around the corner, I am excited to announce this year's Sullivan Cup competition. The Sullivan Cup is held every other year at Fort Benning, GA, to rigorously test and evaluate the best tank crews from across the Armor Branch, the U.S. Marine Corps and international partners.

The Sullivan Cup is named in honor of retired GEN Gordon R. Sullivan, who was an Armor officer for 36 years, serving in a multitude of commands and culminating as the 32nd Chief of Staff of the Army and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This year's Sullivan Cup will take place the first week of May. The competition will bring together tank crews from across the Army and across the world in a competition that will rigorously and comprehensively test their individual- and crew-level proficiencies. The competition will require mastery of individual tasks, technical and tactical competence, and the ability to demonstrate an array of maneuver, sustainment and gunnery skills.

The competition focuses primarily on the performance of the *individuals* functioning as a crew. The key to success for the winning crew will be the training provided at their home station by their unit's master gunners and tank commanders. The noncommissioned officers (NCOs) serving as master gunners were chosen to serve as subject-matter experts and to aid and assist commanders at all echelons in the planning, development and execution of training individual- and crew-gunnery tasks, vital to the unit's effectiveness in combat. The tank commanders, primarily junior NCOs, are overall responsible for training each crewmember, ensuring proficiency in their assigned position and cross-training their crewmembers in other positions. The lethality of our formations begins and ends with the NCO.

Competitions like the Sullivan Cup serve to recognize excellence throughout the force and across the Armor Branch. More importantly, they highlight the importance of mastering the fundamentals that we must preserve as a fighting force to maintain a lethal edge over our potential adversaries.

I would like to close by stating this will be my last **ARMOR** article as the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Armor School. I would like to take this opportunity to express what a privilege this assignment has been. During my tenure as the Armor School command sergeant major, I have had the pleasure of overseeing the growth of the 19D and 19K military-occupation specialties; the standardization of the 6x36 scout platoon; gender integration at both the officer and enlisted levels; and the implementation of high-physical-demands tasks into training programs of instruction for all 19-series Soldiers. I would like to introduce CSM Kevin Muhlenbeck as he comes in as the next Thunderbolt 7. I am immensely proud of what our branch has accomplished and what it continues to achieve, and I am honored to count myself a member of the combat arm of decision.

Forge the Thunderbolt! Armor Strong!

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